



Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc.

President's Report for 2017-2019

It was an exciting time for MGC as we worked together under the theme *Plant America; Grow and Share* as members of National Garden Clubs, Inc.(NGC) and Central Region Garden Clubs, Inc. (CR) and also partnering with others outside our organization, such as schools, organizations, societies, Girl Scouts, 4-H, Master Gardeners, Veteran groups, civic groups, to name but a few.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- **Unanticipated Challenges:**
 - **Board meeting relocation after 30-plus years:** New facilities (Trinity Church, Lansing) found for meetings had very positive results.
 - **Elected District Director Vacancy:** Without having an elected Director, MGC Board members served the District while exploring solutions which included a proposal for the redistribution of the Clubs. However, this was not acceptable to the District and they organized a District Steering Team to share some of the duties of the District Director and nominated Lynn Keelan to serve as District Director. The Board appointed Lynn who was subsequently elected at the next Annual Meeting(June, 2018). The concept of having a steering committee share some of the district responsibilities worked extremely well and now other Districts are considering doing the same.
 - **Estate Funds:** Significant donations (Anne Javoroski and ??????) were received from passing members and invested.
- **Public Awareness of MGC and its Mission:**
 - **Flower Shows** (State Flower Show at the 2018 Convention; Horticulture Specialty Flower Show at the CR Annual Convention, District-sponsored Standard Flower Show at the Lansing Home and Garden Show, and those of 16 member club(s)).
 - The MGC President's Award of Excellence rosette (top award for each Division) was designed and awarded, if offered, to the best exhibit(s) highlighting pollinators and/or pollinator gardens.
 - **Environmental School:** Completed two courses in Holland with 25 attendees and started Course I of the next series in Midland April, 2019.
 - **Gardening School:** Held first two courses in Monroe (Course I: 18 attendees; Course II: 26 attendees) and third in Tipton, May 2019.
 - **Landscape Design School:** Completed courses III and IV in Kalamazoo and started course I of the next series in Grand Haven April, 2019.
 - **Advertisements and Donations:**
 - Advertised in the 2018 and 2019 Wildflower Association of Michigan Conference program book and provided membership materials and NGC School schedules for their welcome bags.
 - MGC donated to the Belle Isle Conservancy for the Oudorf Garden-Detroit.
 - Members continued donating to Loda Lake.
 - Presented a MGC Presidential Citation to Country Gardens magazine's 20th Annual Garden Award winner Anne Aschcroft Seagren from Caro on Saginaw live television in 2018.
 - Advertised in NGC Convention Program Book—specifically Oudolf Garden-Detroit.
 - **Fiftieth Anniversary of Vietnam War Dedication with VFW:** Participated in dedicating US Department of Defense award in Caro.
 - **Blue/Gold Star Memorials:** Dedicated 7 Blue Star Memorials and in Grand Haven our first Gold Star which was dedicated in combination with their Blue Star.
 - **Partners:** For southwest Michigan District III's fall conference, we partnered with the Board of the Hyde Bailey Museum to celebrate the Museum's 60th anniversary with keynote speaker, Dr. Douglas Tallamy and thirteen other expert speakers.
 - **Promoted Black Swallowtail Butterfly be made the Official State Butterfly:** Members wrote to and met with legislators and gained sponsors, developed educational and promotional materials, presented at various meetings, attended public events, designed a Black Swallowtail Butterfly pin and publicized it in publications around the state. Michigan Senate Bill 167 and Michigan House

Bill 4314 were introduced for the new administration. Assembled a “kit” for sharing with legislators.

- **Michigan Pollinator Gardens—our four-year project:**
 - Promoted the establishment, enhancements (providing for entire life-cycle), and maintenance of Michigan pollinator gardens, including pollinator-safe gardening practices.
 - In 2018, letters were sent to State legislators and Governor requesting a Michigan Pollinator Week Proclamation which were not successful.
 - In 2019, letters were sent to State legislators, chairs of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committees in both the State House of Representatives and Senate, the Governor of the new Administration requesting that June 17-23, 2019 be proclaimed Michigan Pollinator Week. Letters were also sent to other organizations (Michigan Nature Association, Southeast Michigan Bee Keepers Association, Southeast Michigan Butterfly Association, Michigan Master Gardener Association, 4-H, and Farm Bureau) informing them what MGC does and requesting their support for our efforts.
 - Michigan Nature Association endorsed our efforts in a letter sent to Governor Gretchen Whitmer February, 2019. The Southeast Michigan Beekeeper’s also expressed their interest and it was suggested that they write their legislators and Governor. Governor Whitmer proclaim June 17-23 as Michigan Pollinator Week.
 - Without the President’s knowledge, the Board designed a metal Michigan Pollinator Garden sign that gardeners can purchase and place in their pollinator gardens. It was revealed at the final banquet of the 2019 Conference when presented to the President...and the room was filled with people raising their signs. It was the President’s dream to have such a sign that would be in every pollinator garden across Michigan. I thank the Board for such an awesome surprise.
- **Leadership-Development within member clubs—developing our future leaders.**
 - We offered leadership development sessions at both the 2018 87th Annual Convention (140 attendees) and 2019 88th Conference (eight different sessions for 145 attendees). The first year, there was much interest in finance and becoming a non-profit club, but interest waned in the second year. Based on the number of registrants, the popular topics were: club program ideas, such as flower design and Native Plant presentation/curriculum; effective meetings, publicity, and youth activities. These sessions were open to all members and led by Board members.
 - Some District Directors also offered leadership-development sessions within their District.
 - The annual club President’s Report/Club of Distinction form was designed to be used as a checklist of opportunities they might wish to consider—and many indicated that they used it for their strategic planning. It was formatted to highlight the goals established for this administration. A third page was added so they could recommend outings and speakers. Clubs were more responsive in providing compared to separate requests used in the past. Recommendations with contact information were used to update the MGC Recommended Speaker and Outings lists.
- **Exploration of alternatives to enable members to work on projects at a state level without being a Board member and not having to travel to meetings.** We began identifying positions that could meet this objective. Members in these positions would report into a MGC officer and be able to attend Board meetings, as a guest. The first filled position of this type was that of the Grant Administrator Gail Taggart who reports to the Finance Committee Chair.
- **Retain/Increase Membership:**
 - **Club Assistance:** MGC assisted some clubs to sustain viability and avoid resignation and /or dissolution.
 - **Youth Involvement:** For the long-term viability of MGC we encouraged younger adults and youth to join. By involving the youth, we also believe that we will encourage youth to pursue related careers.
 - **Youth Contests:**
 - NGC Poster Contest: In 2018, of the 1,930 children, who participated, five were sent on and all won an NGC award. In 2019, 943 children participated in the poster contest and sent State winners on. In 2018, of

- the five youth sculptures, two won first place, two received second place.
 - NGC Sculpture Contest: In 2018, all five contestants were sent on. Two won first place, two second place and one Special Recognition at CR. At NGC, one won first place, the other, third place.
 - NGC Poetry Contest: In 2018, a sixth grader won CR first place for his poetry which was published in NGC's "Poetry Anthology."
 - NGC Essay: In 2018, MGC received one essay which was sent on and won second place at CR. In 2019, both essays received were sent on.
 - **Youth Activities.**
 - Many of our member clubs already involve youth and hopefully, more will do so.
 - At the leadership-development portion of the 2019 Annual Conference, we again had a breakout session on Youth Activities
 - The following Youth garden clubs were registered during this administration:
 - Hillsdale Jr. Garden Club date: 10/7/18
 - Sunflower House Youth Garden Club date 11/8/19)
 - Webberville Junior Garden Club date: 11/26/18
 - Morenci Garden Youth Club date: 5/21/19—a Youth Club charter was presented to them.
 - **College Scholarships:** MGC donated a total of \$34,600.
 - **New Benefits:**
 - Re-focused the member-side of the website to provide ready access to information on club benefits.
 - Changed passwords for member-side after dues-date.
 - Provided educational and promotional materials on the Black Swallowtail Butterfly for member club's use.
 - Designed a MGC Native Plants patch featuring the Michigan's Official Wildflower-- Dwarf Lake Iris and educational curriculum for clubs to use in their educational programs enabling attendees to earn the patch.
 - Provided an updated list of Recommended Outings, Tours, Arboreta and Nature Centers.
 - Provided an updated list of Speakers and Programs
 - Added Group Liability Insurance to cover member clubs.
 - **Membership Statistics as of February 20, 2019:** 150 clubs and 5,184 members.
- **Intervention to minimize potential liability.**
 - Rather than getting photo releases from members and non-members attending MGC events, the following statement appears on all registration forms: *"Any photos taken at this event may be used in upcoming information/promotional materials. If you do not want your photo used, notify the registration desk when you check in."*
 - To encourage member clubs to have public events, MGC provided a new member club benefit-- general liability insurance available through MGC's new insurance provider.
 - To protect MGC intellectual property, brochures, presentations now are indicated as copyrighted.
- **Compliance with various laws and regulations.**
 - In 2017 MGC totally revised the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws and were approved at the 2018 Annual Meeting.
 - MGC Policies and Procedures have been updated to reflect those changes with assistance from our newly-engaged accounting firm and lawyer.
 - The former President's pin was determined not to be an inurement, but an award for service rendered and President would receive a letter indicating its value and to seek tax implications from their tax preparer.

- **Fiscal Responsibility:**
 - MGC migrated the multiple MGC EIN satellite checking accounts to one financial institution, thereby giving the Treasurer enhanced oversight capability and the ability to transfer funds internally.
 - As a result of an external financial review of 2016-2017 financial records, we implemented the recommended changes, such as further reduction in the number of satellite accounts and using monthly reconciliation sheets managed by the satellite treasurers.
 - All the financial forms were revised and include both the budget and final report for MGC events to better plan future events.
 - A long-term investment policy was implemented to better manage the funds supporting scholarships and future MGC projects which is overseen by a Finance Committee sub-committee.
 - MGC drafted an “Accountable Plan” in 2018 for reimbursing mileage required by officers of the Board who are required to travel as specified in their job descriptions. The “accountable plan” requires documentation identifying travel, date, reason and receipts or mileage calculation before a volunteer can be reimbursed. Travel by the President and First Vice President was reimbursed in the past to perform the business of the organization.
 - Since District Directors are also required to travel to their club’s events, MGC implemented a two-year trial in 2017 to provide mileage reimbursements up to a limit of \$500.
 - A formal budgeting process was implemented which streamlines not only the budget-development process, but also expedites the funding of budgeted expenses in the approved fiscal budget.
 - Looking for a way to make it more affordable for members to attend MGC annual conferences, MGC developed a sponsorship/advertising program used for both the 2018 and 2019 conferences.
 - The annual budget for fiscal year 2019-2020 was approved at the April 2019 MGC Board Meeting.
 - For the 2020 Annual Conference, MGC is planning to use Conference Direct (at no cost to MGC), on a trial basis, to negotiate contracts with venue to ensure completeness and to further reduce costs.
 - On-line registration with PayPal was first utilized at the 3018 Convention.
 - A President’s Mission Fund was established and provides an alternative for donations which will subsequently be used to support MGC’s major initiatives.
 - MGC has been providing an “incentive” to a district and member club(s) hosting an MGC event by distributing a portion of the “profits;” the MGC Event Incentive Sharing policy was updated to be more inclusive.
 - Each fiscal year, the excess of \$1,000 in a District’s checking account is transferred to their Equity Account.
 - MGC established the “Plant America Grow and Share Club Grant” program to provide grants to member clubs for projects supportive of the MGC Mission. Each year, the District Director determines the amount in their District’s Equity Account to be made available for these grants. Ten grants have been awarded since established.
 - Ten member clubs were accepted into the Group Tax Exemption Program (GTEP), bringing the total to 27 clubs since this program’s inception in early 2017.
 - The Finance Committee drafted a comprehensive Financial Policies and Procedures document.
 - The IRS guidelines on Unrelated Business Income (UBI) were recently changed. Now 501c3 organizations can earn up to \$10,000 without having to pay income tax (an increase from the former \$5,000) as per Seber Tans, MGC Accounting Firm.
 - At a March 12, 2019 combined meeting of the Finance Committee and Executive Committee with Seber Tans personnel, we clarified endowment fund (Delano) with the principal held and the income (from MGC Morgan Stanley Investment) is used for WMU Scholarships. The Scholarship Fund is a donor-restricted fund; the income from that fund has been designated by the Board for scholarships. The MGC Lifetime Membership Fund is a board-designated fund and can be used for any purpose to further MGC’s mission—currently designated for scholarships. The other funds (MAAJ, MCC, Javoroski) are currently invested with no specific designation.

- **Membership Continuing Education.** *Grow and Share* was our theme and we continued providing not only “open-to-the-public” educational opportunities for our members, but also those which are for members only and their invited guests.
 - The 2018 MGC 87th Annual Convention “Bzzzz Michigan” held in Kalamazoo featured many awesome outside speakers on birds, and native plant habitat plus an agricultural farm tour.
 - Attendees at the 2018 Central Region Convention “Michigan October Fest” held in Frankenmuth, was attended by 120 members and some toured the newly-opened Whiting Forest canopy walk, the longest in the US.
 - Those attending the 2019 MGC 88th Annual Conference “Beauty and Balance, Earth and Water,” held in Traverse City, learned about the fourth US public garden of Dutch designer Piet Oudolf being planted in Detroit; as well sessions on raptors, water conservation, landscape design, pollinators; and tours of the Historic Barns Park and Bry Estate. We were honored to have NGC President Gay Austin join us and installed the officers for 2019-2021. The First Vice President of the Garden Club of North Carolina also graced us with her presence—reaching out to us to learn from MGC
 - The Districts invite outside speakers to their annual meetings to speak on a variety of topics that appeal to the varied interests of their members.
- **The Michigan Consultants Council**
 - Forty members attended their annual meeting and engaged a speaker from the Michigan State University Extension office to speak on invasive pests and plants.
 - A Tri- Refresher held in Hickory Corners, with 27 consultants attending, had outside speakers presenting on Heirloom Seeds and Gardens; Rain Gardens and Native Plants; and Pollinator Gardens.
- **The Michigan Association of Accredited Judges:**
 - Consists of 11 students, 5 Life, 12 Accredited, and 30 Master.
 - An educational workshop, with Dave Robson, was held with 40 participants to gain familiarity with the new Handbook for Flower Shows and to review and critique designs.
 - A Flower Show Symposium with 41 attendees (several from out-of-state) and 34 judges testing was held in Ann Arbor and featured the new low-profile and cascade designs plus scoring etiquette.

MGC Board:

- The Finance Committee continued meeting the afternoon prior to the Board meeting.
- To enable the Executive Committees adequate time to meet and prepare for the Board meeting, it met late mid-afternoon prior to the Board meeting; after the Finance Committee meeting.
- District Directors chose to meet prior to the Executive Committee.
- Moving the Executive Committee meetings to the prior day, provided more time for networking (desired by members) and committee meetings thereby enabling them to bring motions directly from Committee to the Board for a vote and to share their plans.
- A Board-member-only side of the MGC website was created where Board materials are placed to enable Board members to review prior to the upcoming meeting or to review former meeting materials.
- Time was spent discerning which items needed to go to the Executive Committee and then to the Board or directly to the Board.
- New job positions for Credentials Chair and formal procedures were written and used for both Annual Meetings.
- New Conference Protocol Chair job description was developed with the person helping with the implementation of the plans for the Annual Convention/Conference.
- A District Director’s Handbook and timeline were developed to help orient new District Directors and to provide reference for District Director’s activities.
- Becoming increasingly more difficult to recruit Board members and some positions were left vacant. When unable to recruit a parliamentarian to complete the term when the Parliamentarian had to resign due to family health issues, we recruited a former MGC Parliamentarian to serve at the 2019 Annual Meeting.

Converting to Conference Format from Convention Format:

- To comply with the approved Bylaws, there was a need to change to a different format. Care was taken to retain history while streamlining the conference in responding to members' suggestions: shorter meeting, more education—both gardening related and leadership-development, more time to shop and more time to network, The major changes were:
 - The name change from “Convention” to “Conference.” To relish our history, the number of annual events held by MGC since its inception was retained. Therefore, the name of the 2019 annual event “88th Annual Conference” rather than 1st Annual Conference.
 - A clearer demarcation between Conference portions and Annual Membership Meeting.
 - The Conference is “opened” and “closed.” Whereas, the Annual Membership Meeting is “called to order” and “adjourned.”

- Conference Portion:
 - “Opening”
 - Introductions
 - Color Guard Presentation of Colors –omitted due to ever-increasing difficulties finding one able to serve.
 - Invocation
 - Pledge to the flag
 - Welcome to the Conference
 - Invitation to the next Conference
 - Adoption of the Conference Standing Rules
 - Adoption of the Conference Agenda
 - Registrar’s Report
 - President’s Annual Report
 - Memorial Service
 - Announcements
 - Recessed

The Annual Membership Meeting is held within the Conference, not before nor after. Delegates will be encouraged to attend the “Opening” of the Conference, as well as the “closing.”

- Annual Meeting Portion
 - Call to Order
 - Welcome
 - Introductions
 - Invocation—eliminated since done in conference opening
 - Pledge-eliminated since done in conference opening
 - Credentials Report given only during Annual Membership meeting, including affidavit that meeting was properly called and materials provided to the delegates.
 - Quorum Declaration
 - Adoption of Annual Membership Meeting Standing Rules
 - Adoption of Annual Membership Meeting Agenda
 - Appointment of Committee to Approve Minutes of this meeting
 - Appointment of Time Keeper(s)
 - Presentation of last year’s Annual Meeting Minutes
 - Treasurer’s Report
 - Business items
 - Announcements
 - Meeting may be adjourned or if necessary, recessed to resume later to complete the business without loss of quorum.

- Conference Closing
 - At the completion of the last scheduled activity—usually the final banquet, it is closed.

- The MAAJ and MCC continued having a short meeting prior to the Conference Opening.
- The MGC Board met shortly—combined with Executive Committee prior to the Opening.
- District meetings were held, as at past conventions, at which awards were presented.
- Different groups were again honored at luncheons and dinners. These groups were based on major goals targeted for this administration. Rather than having an “award night,” top state awards were presented throughout the luncheons (e.g., youth awards at the banquet honoring youth activities). At the closing banquet, the NGC/CR awards were presented. The areas honored included: Club Presidents; Those working with Youth; Those attending/hosting NGC schools/symposiums/refreshers including graduates and Four/Five-Stars; and of course, the newly-elected MGC officers.
- Care was taken to provide officers the opportunity to preside at a luncheon/banquet with Board chairs who worked with the group being honored seated at the head table rather than the President. Officers were also given the opportunity to sit at the table with NGC President and former presidents rather than the President sitting there. NGC President Gay Austin understood that it was part of our leadership-development initiative.
- The President wrote all the scripts for the luncheons, banquets, conference, and annual meeting to help those presiding and to provide a historical detail record of the event.
- Outgoing officers were recognized and presented with a rose thanking them for their service. Commemorative certificates and rose were presented to all incoming officers.
- For both 2018 and 2019 convention/conference, we had a Protocol Chair who was indispensable in having the annual events go smoothly.
- We formalized the policy and procedure for handling delegates for the Annual Meeting and the Credentials Chair assumed this responsibility for both 2018 and 2019.

The above cover only a small number of activities compared to all what our member clubs did in their communities. As President of our organization, I am proud of what we have accomplished **together** during 2017-2019 in addressing the above challenges/goals/opportunities and preparing us to meet the future. A special joy was seeing members “blossom” as they developed their leadership skills—both within the clubs and the Board. We should all be very proud of where we are today and excited about what we can do in the future.

Our special thanks to NGC President Gay Austin who installed our officers for 2019-2021. Our gratitude to National Garden Clubs, Inc. and Central Region Garden Clubs, Inc. for their support and encouragement.

Regards,

Carol Sue Brodbeck
Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc. President
Plant America: Grow & Share
Michigan Pollinator Gardens